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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANJUL 000034

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DAKAR PLS PASS ODC, DAO, AND RAO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/22/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [KMCA](#) [GA](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: JOURNALIST ON U.S, IRANIAN TIES

REF: A. BANJUL 33 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. BANJUL 19

[1](#)C. BANJUL 11

[1](#)D. BANJUL 16

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) President Jammeh remains deeply resentful over the suspension of MCA eligibility and holds Ambassador personally responsible, but advisers are quietly warning Jammeh to avoid going too far in antagonizing the U.S., according to well-informed journalist and Embassy contact. He said Jammeh had requested dols five million in financial aid during the Iranian President's recent stopovers here, but that latter had made no commitment. Resident Turkish military advisor provided further details on the Iranian military training mission here. END SUMMARY.

A STILL-RESENTFUL PRESIDENT JAMMEH

[1](#)2. (C) In January 19 conversation with Ambassador, Pap Saine (protect), well-informed chief editor at independent daily, "The Point," indicated that President Yahya Jammeh remained deeply resentful over the June 2006 suspension of The Gambia's MCA eligibility due to slippage on various eligibility criteria. Citing sources at the Presidency, Saine stated that Jammeh was particularly angry with Ambassador, holding him personally responsible for the MCC's decision to suspend. Saine added that he was aware that the Ambassador's repeated requests in recent months to meet with Jammeh had come to naught, remarking that Jammeh himself had made the decision not to grant the requested meetings. (COMMENT: Most recently, in mid-January, Presidency declined Ambassador's request to meet with Jammeh to discuss counterterrorism cooperation; Ambassador was received instead by the National Intelligence Agency head, as reported ref a. END COMMENT)

ADVICE TO JAMMEH ABOUT U.S. RELATIONSHIP

[1](#)3. (C) Saine confided that several advisers to Jammeh were quietly telling him of the need to avoid unduly antagonizing the U.S., pointing out to him that running afoul of the superpower could do The Gambia no good. To drive the point home, he continued, these advisers had reminded Jammeh of the

removal of two heads of state that they (the advisors) portrayed as "deposed" by the U.S. -- Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Liberia's Charles Taylor.

THE EMERGING IRANIAN RELATIONSHIP

¶4. (C) Saine, again citing sources at the Presidency, said Jammeh had used Iranian President Ahmadinejad's transits here January 13-16 (ref b) to press for dols five million in financial aid. According to Saine, Jammeh had assured Ahmadinejad of his support for the latter's opposition to "Western domination" and, to prove it, had shown the Iranian leader the text of his (Jammeh's) year-end interview in which Jammeh delivered a familiar anti-Western diatribe (ref c). Saine stated that Ahmadinejad had agreed to consider Jammeh's aid request, but had stopped short of making any commitment. (NOTE: Regarding the Iranian military training team here reported in ref b, the resident Turkish military advisor informed us that it is composed of six persons, that it arrived in The Gambia, several months ago, and that it is providing the training to Gambian units in Jammeh's home village of Kanilai, located about 90 kilometers east of Banjul. The Turkish military advisor did not have any details on the units being trained, but they may include Kanilai-based members of the Presidential security force -- whose members are seconded from the army -- and militia elements. END NOTE)

COMMENT

¶5. (C) Whatever Jammeh's ongoing resentment toward the USG and Ambassador personally, other senior GOTG figures remain accessible to us, as evidenced by Ambassador's recent meetings with the Vice President (ref d) and NIA Director. At the same time, his increasingly erratic behavior of late -- and his courting of Iran -- underscores the fact that his

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continued support for bilateral cooperation in such key areas as counterterrorism cannot simply be taken for granted. END COMMENT.

STAFFORD